

Phrases & Idioms (English meanings & Examples)

ABC (the rudiments): He does not know the ABC of science.

Above all (chiefly): Nazrul was above all a good poet.

Aboveboard (without any secret): His dealings are open and above board.

After all (in spite of all that has been said): He is after all an honest man.

All at once (suddenly): All at once, I saw a crowd.

All in all (all powerful): The Headmaster is all in all in the school.

All on a sudden! All 'of a sudden (unexpectedly): All of a sudden, the girl fell into the pond.

All the same (no difference): It is all the same whether you come or not

Anything but (far from): Your statement is anything but true.

Apple of discord (subject of quarrel): A piece of land is the apple of discord between the two brothers.

As it were (so to say): The moon is, as it were, the lamp of the earth.

As usual (as it commonly happens): He started for school as usual.

As good as (keeping promise): He is as good as his word.

At all (even a little): I do not care for him at all.

At a loss (puzzled): I am at a loss to decide what to do now.

As to (about): As to that, I know nothing.

At all events (in any case): I shall go there at all events.

At daggers drawn (at enmity): The two brothers are at daggers drawn with each other.

At home in (familiar, comfortable, proficient): He is very at home in English.

At last (ultimately): At last, he came.

At a time (each time): Come in one at a time.

At times (occasionally): At times, he loses his temper.

At random (without any aim): He talks at random.

At large (freely): Birds fly at large in the sky.

At the eleventh hour (at the last moment): They visit the patient at the eleventh hour.

At a stretch (without a break): I can walk ten miles at a stretch.

At the point of (very near): The man is now at the point of death.

At one's disposal (under one's control): The job is now at your disposal.

At one's finger-ends (thoroughly familiar with): Mathematics is at his finger-ends.

At stake (in danger): His life is at stake.

At sixes and sevens (in disorder): The books are at sixes and sevens on the table.

Bad blood (ill feeling): There was a bad blood between the two brothers.

Bag and baggage (with all belongings): The students left the hostel bag and baggage.

Bed of roses (a pleasant condition of life): Life is not a bed of roses.

Before long (soon): He will arrive before long.

Beggar description (to be indescribable): Their sufferings in the rains beggar description.

Bid fair (seem likely to): A good boy bids fair to success.

Birds of a feather (persons of the same nature): Birds of a feather flock together.

Blue blood (high birth): The man is proud of his blue blood.

Black sheep (a man of bad character): There are some black sheep in every society.

Bolt from the blue (unexpected calamity): The news of his death came to me as a bolt from the blue.

Bone of contention (matter of dispute): This boundary wall is a bone of contention between the two neighbours.

Bosom friend (most intimate friend): He is my bosom friend.

By all means (in every possible way): I shall help you by all means.

Beyond doubt (undoubtedly): He will come back beyond doubt.

By dint of (by means of): You can succeed in life by dint of hard work.

By fits and starts (irregularly): If you read by fits and starts, you cannot pass well.

By virtue of (because of): He claimed a pension, by virtue of his long service.

By leaps and bounds (at a rapid rate): The price of essentials is increasing by leaps and bounds.

By turns (one after another): They worked in the garden by turns.

By hook or by crook (any how): I shall do it by hook or by crook.

Burning question (an important thing): Population problem is a burning question of the day.

By the by (incidentally): By the by, he told me about his plan.

By this time (by now): He must have reached home by this time.

Bring to light (to let the public know): The secret was brought to light.

Bring to book (to call to account): The criminal should be brought to book.

By chance (incidentally): By chance, I met him on the way.

Call to mind (to remember): I cannot call to mind what he told me.

Chicken-hearted (cowardly): A chicken-hearted man like you cannot do it.

A close-fisted man (a miser): A close-fisted man spends nothing in charity.

Cock and bull story (a foolish story): A cock and bull story makes us laugh only.

Come in question (to doubt): His honesty cannot be called in question.

Come to light (to be known): The secret has come to light.

Come true (to be proved true): His dream came true.

Crocodile tears (pretended grief): His step-mother shed crocodile tears at the death of his sister.

Crying need (urgent necessary): Education is the crying need of a nation.

Cut a sorry figure (to produce bad result): He cut a sorry figure in the examination.

Cut short (to shorter): Please cut short your lecture.

Cold war (unfriendly relation and no actual fighting): The two nations are at cold war.

Dead letter {not in force}: This law is a dead letter now.

Dead language (not spoken): Sanskrit is now a dead language.

Dog in the manger policy (unnecessarily obstructing others): I do not support your dog in the manger policy.

End in smoke (to become useless): All his attempts ended in smoke.

Every other day (on alternate day): Take the medicine every other day.

Fall flat (not to be effective): The plan fell flat for want of money.

Fair weather friend (false friend): Fair weather friends never come in hard days.

Far and wide (all around): His fame spread far and wide.

First and foremost (main & most important): The first and foremost duty of a student is to read.

Flesh and blood (human nature): A flesh and blood cannot tolerate this torture.

For the time being (for the present): Please let me wait here for the time being.

Find fault with (to detect fault): Do not find fault with others.

Fall short of (be inadequate): Your performance fell short of our expectation.

For good (for ever): He left the country for good.

For the sake of (on account of): He sacrificed much for the sake of peace.

From hand to mouth (very poorly): A beggar lives from hand to mouth.

From head to foot (the whole body): The Headmaster looked at him from head to foot.

Get rid of (to make free): We should try to get rid of the problem.

Gift of the gab (a talented orator): Sher-e-Bangla was a gift of the gab.

Golden age (an age of development): Queen Elizabeth's period is called the golden age of English literature.

Golden opportunity (an excellent opportunity): You have lost a golden opportunity of going abroad.

Hue and cry (up roar): They raised a hue and cry at the sight of the tiger.

Hard and fast (fixed): There are some hard and fast rules in cricket.

Heart and soul (earnestly): He tried heart and soul to win the prize.

Hale and hearty (physically sound): I hope you are hale and hearty.

Head or tail (no meaning): I could not make out head or tail of what he said. (Make out = understand)

High and low (all without exception): He is loved by all high and low.

Hang in the balance (to remain uncertain): The fate of the prisoners are still hanging in the balance.

In black and white (in writing): Please give the statement in black and white.

In a fix (in a difficult situation): I am in a fix and so I cannot do it without your help.

In case (if): In case you fail, you have to try again.

In fine (in conclusion): In fine, he advised us to co-operate with one another.

In full swing (in full force): The school is going on in full swing.

In lieu of (in stead of): He gave me a pen in lieu of a pencil.

In spite of (not withstanding): He came in spite of rain.

In the long run (ultimately): If you are lazy, you have to suffer in the long run.

Ins and outs (details): I know the ins and outs of the affair.

In a nut-shell (in short): He told us the story in a nut-shell.

In quest of (in search of): Tigers prowl in quest of prey.

In the good book of (in favour with): You are in the good book of the Managing Director.

In view of (in consideration): In view of his age, he was forgiven.

In no time (soon): He will return in no time.

In cold blood (deliberately): He murdered the man in cold blood.

Kith and kin (relatives): He has no kith and kin in the city.

Know no bounds (to be boundless): The orphan's sufferings after the death of his father knew no bounds.

Leave no stone unturned (to neglect no means): He left no stone unturned to gain the object.

Lion's share (major portion): The mill owners take the lion's share of the profit.

Lose heart (to be in despair): You should not lose heart when you fail to get your desired thing.

Long and short (the simple fact): This is the long and short of the story.

Man of letters (learned man): Everybody respects a man of letters.

Maiden speech (the first speech in public): Everybody was charmed to hear his maiden speech.

Make good (to compensate for): I shall make good of the loss.

Muster strong (to gather in a large number): People mustered strong in the meeting.

Make the best use of (use properly): You should make the best use of your time.

Make sure (to ascertain): You must make sure of your aim.

Nip in the bud (to destroy in the initial stage): All his hopes were nipped in the bud at the death of his father.

Now and then (occasionally): He visits our house now and then.

Null and void (invalid): This law is now null and void.

On behalf of (as a representative of): The chairman spoke on behalf of the council.

Of course (surely): Of course he will return soon.

Once and again (frequently): Father warned me once and again not to see the film.

Once for all (now and for the last time): I have seen his dead face once for all.

Open secret (secret known to all): Corruption in upper levels is an open secret.

Out of pocket (having no money): I am now out of pocket, so I cannot give you the money.

On foot (by walking): He came on foot.

On the eve of (just before): I went to the airport on the eve of his departure.

Part and parcel (an integral part): A library is a part and parcel of an educational institution.

Play hide and seek (a hiding and finding out game): The children were playing hide and seek.

Play truant (to leave or stay away from school without reason): Nazrul used to play truant.

Pros and cons (advantages & disadvantages): You must know the pros and cons of the matter.

Point blank (directly): The terrorist shot at him point blank.

Play tricks (play false): Some politicians play false with people.

Put off (lay aside): Do not put off your lesson for tomorrow.

Put off (take off/ remove): Put off your dirty shirt.

Put out (extinguish): Put out the lamp.

Rag day (the last day of education): Students enjoy the Rag day every year.

Red letter day (a memorable day): The Independence Day is a red letter day.

A rainy day (hard times): We should save money against a rainy day.

Red-handed (at the time of committing a crime): The thief was caught red-handed.

Skin and bone (skeleton): Disease makes a man skin and bone.

Slow coach (a person slow in action): A slow coach like him cannot do it within this time.

Stone's throw (at short distance): My school is at a stone's throw from my residence.

Sum and substance (summary): This is the sum and substance of the story.

Summer friends (false friends): Summer friends do not come during evil days.

Square meal (full meal): The poor cannot have two square meals a day.

Step by step (gradually): Try to advance step by step.

Tell upon (to affect): Overwork will tell upon your health. .

To the back bone (in the inmost being): The boy is wicked to the backbone.

Ups and downs (rise and fall): Every life has ups and downs.

Up and doing (very active): Be up and doing to prosper in life.

Without fail (certainly): I will go there tomorrow without fail.

Weal and woe (in happiness and sufferings): Good friends will help you in weal and woe.

Well-to-do (solvent): He comes of a well-to-do family.

The End

Reference: English Grammar and Composition, class 9-10 (NCTB)

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